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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR JANUARY 21 UNSC OPEN DEBATE ON UNAMI AND MNF-I

¶1. USUN is instructed to draw from the following text in its statement at the January 21 UNSC open debate on UNAMI and MNF-I.

¶2. Begin text: It is my pleasure to report today on behalf of the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I), as requested by UN Security Council resolutions 1546, 1637, 1723, and 1790. I was pleased to hear the report on the work of UNAMI in Iraq and to see the progress it is making under the leadership of SRSG de Mistura, particularly in helping to address issues associated with Article 140. We are also pleased the Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1790 on December 18, extending the mandate of MNF-I for another year and allowing Iraq time to achieve the objectives it has set for itself as an independent and sovereign state.

¶3. Mr. President, the United States shares with the Iraqi people the goal of achieving a secure, stable, democratic Iraq at peace with itself and its neighbors. It was with this goal in mind one year ago that President Bush approved an increase in our troop strength in Iraq to help Iraqis secure the population, isolate extremists, create the conditions for political and economic progress, and accelerate the transition to Iraqi responsibility.

¶4. The continued implementation of the "New Way Forward" strategy combined with the surge in overall force levels in Iraq has considerably improved levels of security during the past quarter. Efforts to enhance population security, such as the establishment of Joint Security Stations in key areas, have enhanced Coalition and Iraqi forces' ability to interact with local residents and obtain information on insurgents and illegal militia activities. Improved security is beginning to achieve momentum that, if maintained, may lead to sustained stability.

¶5. The number of security incidents has fallen significantly and is now at levels last seen in early 2005. Monthly overall attacks - those against the coalition forces, Iraqi Security Forces, civilians and infrastructure attacks -- have been reduced by 60 percent since June 2007. The overall reduction in security incidents can be attributed to several factors, including the continued decrease in capabilities of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and militia extremists, increased tribal initiatives against AQI and other extremists, Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire order to his Jaysh al-Mahdi militia, the increased capability of the Iraqi military and police, and the sustained presence of Coalition and Iraqi forces among the population.

¶6. Today we can look back at some of the recent and long-term gains of this "surge" in MNF-I forces. Let me introduce some specific examples.

¶ 7. Any loss of innocent life is deeply regrettable, and the overall number of civilian casualties has declined significantly this quarter, and now is below the level in February 2006 prior to the Samarra Mosque bombing. Coalition casualty rates have dropped as well and December 2007 was the second-lowest death toll of the war, going back to May 2003.

¶ 8. Another striking trend is the reduction in ethno-sectarian attacks and deaths -- both of which have decreased over 90 percent in the Baghdad security districts from January to December 2007.

¶ 9. Weekly IED incidents have fallen 68 percent since the start of Operation Phantom Thunder in late June 2007. This drop in IED incidents may be attributed to the disruption of insurgent networks that has hindered their operational capability. High-profile attacks in Iraq, such as car bombs and suicide attacks, have declined by over 50 percent since March 2007.

¶ 10. As a result of the overall reduction in the number and effectiveness of attacks, Coalition deaths across Iraq fell to about one-fourth of the high reached in May 2007. The number of attacks against Iraqi forces also decreased, with a slightly smaller proportionate reduction in deaths.

¶ 11. There are currently 33 countries playing an essential role to support security in Iraq either as a part of the Coalition or UNAMI operations. Coalition members other

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than the U.S. and Iraq contribute approximately 10,300 troops to the Coalition, and another 450 to support UNAMI. The specific contributions run from major patrolling operations, such as the 1,850 soldier strong Georgian contingent that operates in Wasit Province, to the Albanian contingent guarding an airfield, to the 37-soldier contingent of Bosnians who find and destroy unexploded ordinances. These troops play an indispensable role in the Coalition's daily operations and success in Iraq.

¶ 12. The Government of Iraq is also moving forward to take greater control of the country's security. Iraqi forces conducted a surge of their own in 2007, providing well over 100,000 more Iraqi police and soldiers. As of December 24, 2007, the number of Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministry personnel had risen to 516,646. Ten divisions, 34 brigades and 108 battalions have the lead in counterinsurgency operations in their areas of responsibility, an increase of one brigade and five battalions since last quarter. And of all formed Iraqi Army units, 77 percent are rated as being able to plan, execute and sustain operations with minimal or no assistance from Coalition forces.

¶ 13. The Coalition continues to transfer responsibility for security to the Government of Iraq which now has lead security responsibility for nine out of eighteen provinces. Prime Minister al-Maliki has pledged that Iraq will assume security responsibility for the remaining nine provinces by the end of 2008. The provinces under Coalition security control will continue to transition in the coming months as Iraqi forces demonstrate their readiness to assume this responsibility.

¶ 14. This transition to Provincial Iraqi Control (or "PIC") is proceeding as planned. On October 29, Karbala Province "PIC'ed," and on December 16, Basrah Province did the same. Over the previous four months, Iraqi security forces had maintained their own security and successfully demonstrated their readiness to assume full responsibility over Iraq's second largest city and its environs.

¶ 15. Bottom-up reconciliation in the provinces has made

significant advances. Local leaders, both Sunni and Shi'a, are working with Coalition forces, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Government of Iraq to improve security and economic conditions in their areas.

¶16. There are about 80,000 local citizens who have volunteered to fight against extremists under Coalition force supervision in many parts of Iraq. These citizens protect critical infrastructure in their neighborhoods, and some form neighborhood watch groups.

¶17. Anbar province continues to show dramatic improvements in security. A year ago, Anbar Province was the most violent province in Iraq, accounting for more than 25 percent of all attacks throughout the country. Its citizens grew weary of the violence and turmoil that plagued their province, and began to cooperate closely with Iraqi and Coalition forces. The Anbar Awakening turned the tide in the fight against al-Qaeda in Iraq in the Sunni tribal areas. Today local citizens are fighting al-Qaeda and working with Coalition and Iraqi forces to bring security to their neighborhoods. As a result, this quarter, attacks in Anbar plummeted to less than 6 percent of the total, and life is rapidly returning to normal.

¶18. Despite these security gains, foreign terrorists and suicide bombers still enter Iraq through Syria. Syria must do more to stem these flows, including instituting a stricter visa regime, detaining known facilitators, increasing information sharing with countries of origin and transit, and further enhancing border security. Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps continue to train, equip, and fund Shi'a extremists despite reported assurances to Prime Minister al Maliki that Iran will cease lethal aid.

¶19. Mr. President, Iraq has come a long way, but much work remains to be done. Looking ahead, we know that Iraq faces challenges in several areas. In 2008, the Coalition's four main areas of focus for the Ministries of Defense and Interior and their forces will continue to develop ministerial capacity; to improve the capabilities of the Iraqi forces; to build specific enabling capabilities including logistics, sustainment and training capacities; and to support the expansion of the Iraqi forces.

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¶20. Politically, Iraq's leaders need to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and compromise, placing national interests over parochial ones. They must work together to address issues such as corruption and terrorist financing, and pass laws on provincial powers, hydrocarbons, and elections (to lay the groundwork for provincial elections, that are long overdue). The Government also must address the mounting problems of corruption, including repairing the damage to the Commission on Public Integrity.

¶21. This quarter, the Council of Representatives of Iraq overcame significant hurdles to pass the De-Ba'athification Reform bill. This legislation, which would allow many former members of the Ba'ath Party to assume positions in the government, took months to achieve and involved considerable compromise and collaboration by many political leaders. The Presidency Council is currently considering its ratification. [NOTE: Action may be taken on this bill by January 21; please update appropriately.]

¶22. Turning to economic issues, Iraqi ministries executed 43 percent of their capital budgets as of September 30, 2007, which is a substantial improvement over full-year 2006 budget execution. This investment in the economy should help to stimulate growth and reduce vulnerability. In many parts of Iraq, the reopening of schools, clinics,

markets and improvements in essential services all suggest improvements resulting from hard-fought security gains. Year-on-year inflation fell from 65 percent in 2006 to 16 percent through November 2007. The IMF projects that Iraq will have modest growth of 1.3 percent in 2007. In addition, 44 countries agreed to debt reduction for the Government of Iraq on Paris Club terms.

¶23. International and regional engagement also continue to improve. We are grateful for the Secretary-General's participation in the "Expanded Neighbors" ministerial in Istanbul in November, and for UNAMI's offer to support the Government of Iraq in coordinating future meetings. UNAMI has played an important role in the development of the terms of reference for an ad hoc Expanded Neighbors "support mechanism" office to be established in Baghdad. UNAMI's commitment to provide technical assistance and personnel for the office will be elemental in its success and will help the Expanded Neighbors Process to continue to serve as a valuable forum for Iraq and its neighbors to address common security concerns and create opportunities for greater cooperation.

¶24. UNAMI has also demonstrated its leadership in its role as co-lead for the International Compact with Iraq, and in its support for the UN Development Group which administers one of the Iraq Trust Funds of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq. In recent months, UNAMI has contributed substantially to standing up the Secretariat that is helping Iraq and its donor partners to

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implement the reforms and initiatives that are called for in the Compact, and helping Iraq to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

¶25. Iraq is now a different place from one year ago. Much hard work remains, but levels of violence are significantly reduced and solid progress is being made. Hope is returning to Baghdad, and returning to towns and villages throughout the country. Iraqis who fled the violence are beginning to return and rebuild their lives. Some 30,000 Iraqis were able to travel to Mecca by air and ground between December 11 and January 7 to perform the Hajj. In preparation for this, the Mosul airport reopened to civilian flights after being closed for several years.

¶26. Tactical and operational momentum is continuing to build, and these improvements, combined with an increase in provincial government expenditure rates, have contributed to improvements in the delivery of essential services and other key programs to the Iraqi people. Cooperating with Iraqi and Coalition forces by tribal leaders -- both Sunni and Shi'a -- has advanced "bottom-up" reconciliation and assisted in countering extremism. The numerous "tribal awakening" movements and local citizens programs are creating grass roots progress, but challenges remain at the national level. The key to long-term success will be the Government's ability to capitalize upon local gains, pass key legislation, and promote reconciliation.

End text.

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